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KJUS, ELAB, CO
SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR VISIT OF UNDERSECRETARY FOR
POLITICAL AFFAIRS R. NICHOLAS BURNS

Classified By: CDA Milton K. Drucker
Reasons: 1.4 (b,d)

Summary

¶1. (C) Post welcomes the October 24-26 visit to Colombia of U/S for Political Affairs R. Nicholas Burns and his delegation. Uribe remains the country's dominant political figure, with approval ratings close to 70 percent. His congressional coalition controls both houses of Congress but is increasingly difficult to manage. Tensions between the military and police have heated up. Progress on paramilitary demobilization has slowed; Uribe's success in removing almost 32,000 paramilitaries from the battlefield has not been matched by effective reintegration programs for former combatants. An increasing number of demobilized are returning to crime. The GOC and ELN are conducting peace talks in Havana; it is unclear whether the ELN is willing to agree to implement a cease-fire. The GOC and FARC have traded public statements on a humanitarian exchange of some FARC hostages for jailed FARC terrorists, but there is no sign the FARC is serious. Recent GOC statements were cautious and insisted on tough conditions for talks. The GOC wants quick Congressional approval of the U.S.-Colombian Free Trade Agreement. End summary.

Key Messages

¶2. (C) Plan Colombia Consolidation: The GOC's draft Plan Colombia Consolidation Plan (PCCP) is a good start but needs a multilateral--not U.S.--focus and an expected end state after five more years of assistance. Nationalization is the key U.S. principle: the Colombian contribution to PCCP must rise as the U.S. contribution falls, starting in FY2009. The five PCCP pillars (justice, social development, reinsertion, public security, and economic development) capture the broad thematic priorities for the strategic relationship. We need a commitment from the GOC to work with us to complete a PCCP by January.

¶3. (C) Counternarcotics: Aerial eradication is at a new

record of 140,477 hectares, with 2.5 months left in the year.

Interdictions and lab destructions continue at a rapid pace, and seizures of money and other assets are increasing. Nationalizing programs is our priority. This is complicated since missions and goals have increased in the last few years, as have the number of air assets that require support.

The Colombians set up a Colombian government spray package (with a lot of USG support). It has sprayed over 2,600 hectares.

14. (C) Strategic Relationship: Uribe should explore a broader regional role for Colombia, including stronger partnerships with Mexico, Peru, Chile and Brazil. You should encourage him to promote regional economic integration, intensify security relationships, and deepen democratic cooperation. The U.S. and Colombia will also explore a broader defense relationship.

15. (C) Bilateral Issues:

-- Paramilitary Demobilization/Justice: The GOC has removed almost 32,000 former paramilitaries from the battlefield, in addition to 11,000 individual deserters from all terrorist groups, in the last four years. The GOC's appointment of a High Commissioner for Demobilization (Frank Pearl) is welcome, but reintegration of ex-paramilitaries remains disorganized. Reintegration programs have not materialized, and ex-paramilitaries are returning to crime. Implementation of the Justice and Peace law is also lagging. You should urge the GOC to speed up reintegration efforts, and to step up application of the Justice and Peace Law.

-- Extradition: Uribe has extradited over 380 Colombians to the U.S., including FARC terrorists "Simon Trinidad," currently on trial in New York for abetting kidnapping of 3

U.S. citizens, and FARC finance expert "Sonia," whose U.S. trial starts in January. Uribe approved, but suspended, extradition of 5 paramilitary leaders, subject to full compliance with Justice and Peace Law terms. You should recognize the GOC's extradition record, but stress it is vital that extraditions continue. You should also emphasize that the GOC's increased use of suspensions will be viewed skeptically in Congress and elsewhere.

-- Victims, Justice, and Reparations: The National Reparations and Reconciliation Commission has opened two of its five regional offices to register victims of paramilitary violence and assist them with legal issues associated with implementation of the Justice and Peace Law. The Commission will design individual and collective reparations. The Commission has been seized with organizational issues, and has launched few concrete programs. You should stress the need for the Commission to start programs that recognize victims' suffering and begin the reconciliation process.

--"FARC and ELN Talks": The GOC and FARC have traded public statements on a possible exchange of imprisoned FARC terrorists for FARC "political" hostages. Uribe has accepted a FARC proposal for an "encounter zone" for negotiations but insisted it be free of armed FARC. Uribe has always insisted FARC prisoners do not return to criminal activities. To date, the FARC has not shown it is serious about the talks. You should ask Uribe to reaffirm he will not agree to any exchange that omits the 3 U.S. citizen hostages. The ELN is negotiating with the GOC but it is unclear whether it is ready to implement a cease-fire; the U.S. supports a process that leads to ELN cease-fire, disarmament, and demobilization.

-- Human Rights: Recent GOC actions to strengthen human rights protections are promising. Defense Minister Santos appointed the first civilian, a woman, to head the Military Penal Justice (MPJ) system and announced the need for additional MPJ reforms. The Prosecutor General's Office is implementing an MOU it signed with the MOD that assigns civilian investigators to cases of alleged military human rights abuses, and permits the Office to make the initial

decision to send a case to civilian courts. The Prosecutor General's office arrested 14 military officials since late August for their alleged involvement in extrajudicial killings, and four deputies for alleged involvement in paramilitary criminal activities. In October, the GOC published an implementing decree on the Justice and Peace Law that largely meets our concerns. You should acknowledge recent GOC progress, but reiterate the need for further structural reforms as well as progress on older cases.

-- Labor: Violence against trade unionists remains serious, but has fallen sharply. The GOC states 14 trade unionists were killed in 2005, down from 40 in 2004, a reduction of 66 percent. The Ministry of Interior and Justice Protection program, partly funded by USAID, has protected some 7,700 labor personnel since 1999. In 2005, the Program protected about 1,600 trade unionists. The GOC's decision to invite the ILO to open an office in Colombia is positive, and we urge a renewed emphasis on prosecutions of those responsible for violence against trade unionists.

-- Economic: Colombia's economy is expanding by nearly 6 per cent annually. We expect the U.S.-Colombia Free Trade Agreement (FTA) to be signed shortly after November 22. We expect Colombia's Congress to approve it this year. There is no date yet for the U.S. to submit it to our Congress. Colombia's Andean Trade Preference and Drug Eradication Act (ATPDEA) preferences are set to expire at the end of this year. Extension of ATPDEA until entry into force of the FTA for Colombia is a matter of urgent priority for the GOC.
DRUCKER